


[Site Menu](#)
[Reader Options](#)
[Front Page](#)
[News](#)
[Sports](#)
[Columnists](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Features](#)
[Classified](#)
[Search](#)
[News Sections](#)
[Region](#)
[Elections](#)
[U.S. & World](#)
[War](#)
[Special Projects](#)
[Recent Articles](#)
[Records](#)
[Anniversaries](#)
[Births & Adoptions](#)
[Courts & Reports](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Real Estate](#)
[Weddings](#)
[Popular Areas](#)

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**Special Publications**

[Citizens' Reference Page](#)
[E-The People](#)
[Newspaper In Education](#)
[Special Publications](#)
[GO!](#)
[Community Calendar](#)
[Goodfellows](#)
[Obituary Policy](#)
[OwensboroMLS.com](#)
[Internet Directory](#)
[Movie Listings](#)
[Lottery Results](#)
[Slide Shows](#)
[Weather](#)
[Contests](#)

No contests at this time

## State provides cash for vegetable season

02/19/05

By [Steve Vied](#)  
Messenger-Inquirer

The West Kentucky Growers Cooperative received the money it needed from the state Agricultural Development Board on Friday to operate during the 2005 vegetable growing season, a season that cannot fail if the co-op expects to survive.

The state board, meeting in Frankfort, gave the Daviess County-based vegetable cooperative a \$200,000 grant to cover its losses from the 2004 season, and a \$200,000 line of credit to operate this summer. The cooperative also received \$28,000 toward the expenses of hiring a full-time production manager.

The local cooperative was approved for the grants and loans because it met certain conditions the state board set earlier this year. One of the conditions was that the cooperative secure a additional line of credit in the amount of \$100,000 from a private lending institution. Another condition was that the cooperative collect all outstanding debts owed to it by grower members and customers, or prove that it was taking legal steps to collect the money.

All the conditions were met, said Joe Cecil, the vegetable cooperative's CEO and president of sales. Of the \$109,000 owed the cooperative, all but about \$43,000 has been collected, Cecil said.

In addition, the cooperative has firm commitments from growers to plant more than 450 acres of vegetables, satisfying another condition.

"That's the best news, that we have grower commitments for acreage and volume," Cecil said.

The cooperative also made changes in its policies to satisfy the state



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agriculture board's wishes, Cecil said, including a no-credit policy for growers, budget cuts and efficiencies. The upcoming growing season will be a make or break year for the cooperative, pure and simple, Cecil said.

"We must show a positive result," Cecil said.

There will likely be no more state money for the cooperative if it has a bad 2005 year, Cecil said. But he expects a good year.

"With the changes we've made, we are set up to have a successful year with the least bit of cooperation from the weather," Cecil said.

Bad weather hurt last year's crop. Cooperative sales for 2004 were \$1.4 million, considerably less than previous years.

[Back to top](#)

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**E-mail this page to:**

Name

E-mail

**From:**

Name

E-mail

Message

---

[News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Columnists](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Features](#) | [Classified](#) | [About Us](#) | [New Media](#)

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